

The Low-Ball Compliance Technique: Task or Person Commitment?

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Three experiments were conducted to examine the mediating process involved in the low-ball procedure for increasing compliance. In Experiment 1, subjects who agreed to but were not allowed to perform an initial request complied with a more costly version of the same request to a greater extent than did controls only when the second request came from the same person as did the first request and not when it came from a different person. In Experiment 2, subjects who agreed to but were not allowed to carry out an initial low-cost request complied with a larger request from the same person to the same extent, whether the first request was related or unrelated to the second. In Experiment 3, subjects were allowed or not allowed to perform an initial small request after agreeing to do so. Later, these subjects were approached by either the same or a different person with a larger second request. All groups showed increased compliance over a control cell. However, subjects not allowed to perform the initial request who were approached by the same person for the second request showed a higher rate of compliance than subjects in the other experimental conditions. The results from the three experiments suggest that an unfulfilled obligation to the requester, rather than a commitment to the initial target behavior, is responsible for the effectiveness of the low-ball technique.

Recent social psychological investigations have examined the effectiveness of techniques designed to increase compliance to requests in the absence of any obvious sources of pressure (cf. DeJong, 1979). The earliest compliance-without-pressure technique, the foot-in-the-door, was introduced by Freedman and Fraser (1966). Subjects who complied with an initial small request were found to be more likely to agree to a similar but larger request from a different person than were subjects contacted only with the second request. Freedman and Fraser suggested that as a result of perform-

ing the first request, the subject comes to see him- or herself as the type of person who favors such requests, resulting in an increased willingness to perform the second request.

The most recent procedure for increasing compliance without pressure, the low-ball technique, was demonstrated by Cialdini, Cacioppo, Bassett, and Miller (1978). Subjects who agreed to but had not yet performed an initial small request (e.g., displaying a poster for a charity cause) were found to comply with that same request when it was subsequently made more costly (e.g., they had to pick up the poster at a distant location) at a higher rate than did subjects approached only with the costly version of the request. Additionally, Cialdini et al. demonstrated that the low-ball procedure was significantly more effective in increasing compliance than the foot-in-the-door technique. Although mere agreement to perform an initial small request may be sufficient to engender the same self-perception process that is operative with the foot-in-the-door technique (Bem, 1972), Cialdini et al. ar-

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gued that the low-ball procedure requires an additional commitment to a particular behavior, which is absent in the foot-in-the-door procedure. This additional "cognitive commitment to the performance of the target behavior" (1978, p. 468) was advanced to account for the increased effectiveness of the low-ball procedure beyond that found with the foot-in-the-door technique.

Although Cialdini et al. successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of the low-ball procedure, a close examination of their experiments suggests an alternative interpretation of their findings. In all three of the Cialdini et al. (1978) studies, the same experimenter presented subjects with the first and second request. The possibility exists, therefore, that the subjects experienced an unfulfilled obligation to the specific requester in addition to or instead of a commitment to the target behavior. Individuals agreeing to the initial request may have felt as if they owed something to the requester, because they were unable to carry out the first request. Therefore, when asked by the same experimenter to engage in the behavior at an increased cost, subjects may have complied with the second request to fulfill their obligation to the requester.

Cialdini et al. (1978) provide the example of an automobile salesperson who secures an agreement to purchase a car and then increases the cost of the vehicle. The consumer is said to be committed to the action of purchasing the car and is more likely to purchase the car at an increased cost than if no initial commitment to the car had been made. However, it is reasonable to assume that an obligation to the salesperson has also developed in this situation and may be sufficient to account for the increased willingness to buy the car at the higher price. If the Cialdini et al. reasoning is correct—that as a result of the initial decision, persons become committed to the *car*—then even if a different salesperson were to return with the deal, increased compliance would result. However, if the low-ball procedure is effective because the initial agreement produces an unfulfilled obligation to the *salesperson*, then subjects would more easily reject the car at an increased price if the more costly deal were presented by a new salesperson.

Experiment 1

Our first experiment was designed to test the *obligation-to-the-requester* interpretation of the low-ball effect. Subjects who agreed to but did not perform an initial request were asked to perform the same behavior at a higher cost either by the same requester or by a different individual. Subjects in a control condition were presented only with the second request. It was reasoned that if a commitment to the target behavior is solely responsible for the low-ball effect, as suggested by Cialdini et al., then whether the second (more expensive) request is presented by the same or a different person should not affect the rate of compliance. Both conditions should show more compliance than the control condition. On the other hand, if an unfulfilled obligation to the initial requester is solely responsible for the low-ball effect, as suggested here, then persons receiving the first and second requests from the same individual should comply with the second request at a higher rate than persons who receive the requests from two different people. In fact, the latter condition should not differ from the control cell.

Method

Subjects

Sixty male and female undergraduate psychology students served individually as subjects. All subjects had just finished participating in an experiment on "advertising," for which they received class credit. Five undergraduate males served as experimenters for the study. Which experimenter made which request was determined randomly for each subject.

Procedure

Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Upon completion of the "advertising" experiment, the experimenter gave the subject his or her credit point and then told the subject that he was also working on a class project and needed some students to serve as volunteers. The experimenter presented the subject with several sheets of long division problems and explained that he was conducting research on numeric skills. Each sheet contained 12 problems that required the subject to divide a multidigit number into another multidigit number. The first problem was completed to illustrate that several steps were required in answering each problem. The experimenter explained that the subject's task was to work on the problems until getting them all correct. He further explained that the task took about an hour to complete for the average college student.

All subjects except those in the control condition were then told that they could receive another hour of experimental credit by completing the division problems. The experimenter asked the subject if he or she would like to stay and participate. If the subject asked if he or she could complete only part of the problems, come back to participate, or finish participating in the experiment at a later time, the experimenter explained that he needed to have all of the problems completed at one sitting and the data collected that day.

If subjects declined to participate in the experiment on numeric skills, they were dismissed. If they agreed to participate (27 out of 40 agreed, see Table 1), the experimenter announced that he would have to go to his office to pick up the answer sheets. The experimenter asked the subject to wait in the room for a few minutes, and then he left with the problem sheets.

Same-requester condition. If subjects were assigned to the same-requester condition, the same experimenter returned approximately 2 minutes later with the experimental materials. The experimenter also held a memo, which he said he had just received from the chairman of the psychology department's Human Subjects Committee. He explained that due to a shortage of subjects, he would not be allowed to give any experimental credit for participating in class projects like the numeric skills study. The experimenter then briefly described the task again and asked the subject if he or she would still be willing to participate in the study for no credit. If the subject declined, he or she was debriefed and excused. If the subject agreed, he or she was handed the problem sheet and allowed to work on one problem before being stopped and debriefed.

Different-requester condition. If subjects were assigned to the different-requester condition, a second experimenter returned to the room approximately 2 minutes after the first experimenter had left. The second experimenter introduced himself as one of the persons working on the numeric skills project with the first experimenter. In addition to the experimental materials, he held the memo from the Human Subjects Committee. He explained that the first experimenter had to leave suddenly and would not be back. The experimenter said that he didn't know if the first experimenter had explained the project and briefly repeated the task requirements. He then announced that although they had initially planned to give subjects experimental credit for participating in the numeric skills study, he had just received a memo from the chairman of the Human Subjects Committee that did not allow credit for participating in such projects. Subjects were then asked if they would be willing to participate in the study.

Control condition. Subjects in the control condition were not told about the possibility of earning experimental credit. Instead, when the experimenter presented the initial request he explained that although they had wanted to give 1 hour of credit, the Human Subjects Committee would not allow it. These subjects were thus presented with only the no-credit (more expensive) request.

Results

The number of subjects complying with the first and second requests in each condi-

tion are presented in Table 1. As can be seen in the table, subjects in the two experimental conditions did not differ significantly in their rate of compliance with the initial request, $\chi^2(1) = .11$, *ns*. The investigation was concerned, however, with the rate of compliance with the second, more costly request. Two orthogonal contrasts were conducted. First, the compliance rate of subjects in the different-requester condition (including those declining the initial request) was compared with the compliance rate in the control condition. It was found that the conditions did not differ significantly in their rate of compliance, $\chi^2(1) = .17$, *ns*. Next, the rate of compliance in the same-requester condition was compared with that in the other two conditions. It was found that subjects receiving both requests from the same individual complied with the second request at a greater rate than did subjects in the other two conditions, $\chi^2(1) = 8.93$, $p < .005$.

When the subjects who declined the initial request are dropped from the analyses, similar results are obtained. Different-requester subjects did not comply significantly differently (21%) than control subjects, $\chi^2(1) = .01$, *ns*, and same-requester subjects complied at a rate significantly higher (85%) than that for subjects in the other two conditions, $\chi^2(1) = 10.78$. $p < .005$.

Discussion

The results of Experiment 1 successfully replicated the increase in compliance over a control condition found with the low-ball technique, as operationalized by Cialdini et al. (1978). Subjects complied with a costly request more often when first presented with

Table 1
Percentages of Subjects Complying With Initial and Second Requests

Group	Initial request		Second request	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Same requester	65	13	55	11
Different requester	70	14	15	3
Control	—	—	20	4

Note. $n = 20$ for each cell.

the same request at a lower cost than did subjects presented with only the more costly request. More importantly, however, this effect was found *only* when the same requester presented the first and second requests. When a different experimenter presented the second request, subjects were no more likely to comply with this more costly request than were subjects not receiving the initial request.

The findings thus fail to support Cialdini et al.'s commitment-to-the-behavior explanation for the low-ball effect. Subjects should have been equally committed to performing the target behavior in both the same- and different-requester conditions. The finding that subjects increased their rate of compliance beyond that found in the control condition only when the same person presented both requests suggests that an obligation to the person instead of or in addition to a commitment to the behavior is responsible for the low-ball effect.

Experiment 2

One question that remains unanswered by the first experiment is whether a commitment to the target behavior is at all necessary for producing the low-ball effect. It may be that when a person agrees to but is unable to perform an initial task, the unfulfilled obligation to the requester makes the person more susceptible to a second, more costly request from the same person, even if the second task is unrelated to the first one. On the other hand, if a commitment to perform the target behavior is necessary for the low-ball effect, as suggested by Cialdini et al., then it would be expected that increased compliance would be found only when the second request is a more costly version of the initial request and not when it is unrelated. This question was examined in Experiment 2.

Method

Subjects

Sixty university students were randomly selected from the university phone directory and assigned to one of three experimental conditions.

Procedure

Subjects were contacted by telephone in the evening. If a subject could not be contacted after three attempts, he or she was dropped from the sample and replaced by another randomly selected subject.

Related-request condition. Subjects in the related-request condition heard the following initial request:

Hi. My name is _____ and I'm calling for the Committee for Student Awareness. We are a group of concerned students interested in demonstrating our opposition to further increases in student tuition and fee costs. What I would like to know from you now is, if we send a student by with a petition stating our position, would you be willing to sign it?

If subjects asked for further information about the petition, they were told, "The petition merely says that you, along with other signers, are in opposition to further tuition and fee increases." If subjects agreed to the initial request (only two refused and were replaced), the experimenter replied:

Good. Oh, wait a minute. I'm sorry. I was looking at the wrong list. It looks like we have already filled several petitions. What I meant to call you about was not the petition, but a related task.

Subjects were then presented with the second, more costly request. They were told that in addition to the petitions,

We would also like to get a large number of students to write letters or postcards during this next week to the Student Opinion Administrator here on campus to further demonstrate our opposition. If I give you the address right now, would you be willing to write a short postcard or letter just stating in a line or two that you, too, are opposed to any further increases in tuition and fees?

If subjects inquired about what to write in their letters, they were told, "Just write something like: I am writing to say that I am opposed to further increases in student tuition and fees at [the University of] Missouri." The experimenter waited until receiving a verbal reply to the request before ending the conversation. Thus, in this experimental condition, the cost (in terms of time, energy, and the expense of a stamp) of protesting an increase in tuition was increased. Subjects agreeing to the request were given a mailing address, which would allow the experimenter to record how many subjects in each condition showed behavioral as well as verbal compliance with the more costly request.

Unrelated-request condition. When the experimenter initially contacted subjects in the unrelated-request condition, he also identified himself as a member of the Committee for Student Awareness. Subjects in this condition were presented with the following initial request:

We're calling students to get your opinion about the new campus shuttle bus system. Could you spare a few minutes now to answer about four or five short questions for us?

When subjects agreed to this request (none refused), the experimenter replied:

Good. Oh, wait a minute. I'm sorry. I was looking at the wrong list. What I meant to call you about was not the survey, I've already reached my quota on that, but I wanted to ask you about helping us show our opposition to the suggested further increases in student tuition and fees here at [the University of] Missouri. We have already filled several petitions demonstrating our opposition to these increases.

This was followed by the same letter-writing request that was presented to the subjects in the same-request condition.

Control condition. Subjects in the no-initial-request control condition were also contacted by the experimenter, who identified himself as a member of the Committee for Student Awareness. These subjects were told:

We're calling university students about helping us show our opposition to the suggested further increases in student tuition and fees here at [the University of] Missouri. We have already filled several petitions demonstrating our opposition to these increases.

This was followed by the letter-writing request as presented to subjects in the other two conditions.

Results

Subjects' responses were assigned the following values: 2 = verbal and behavioral compliance (agreed on phone and letter received), 1 = verbal compliance only, and 0 = no compliance. To test the specific hypotheses of interest, two orthogonal planned comparisons were performed.

First, as anticipated, a comparison between the related-request condition ($M = .70$) and the unrelated-request condition ($M = .65$) failed to find a significant difference between the compliance scores for these two groups ($F < 1$). However, as expected, when the combined compliance scores of subjects in the related-request condition and the unrelated-request condition ($M = .68$) were compared with the scores of subjects in the no-initial-request control condition ($M = .35$), a significant effect emerged, $F(1, 57) = 4.70, p < .05$.¹

Discussion

The results of Experiment 2 once again replicated the low-ball effect as operationalized by Cialdini et al. (1978). Subjects complied with a costly request at a higher rate when first presented with a similar low-cost request that they were not allowed to perform. More importantly though, the increase in compliance rate did not vary as a

function of the specific behavior that the individual promised to perform in the initial request. When an unrelated behavior was requested by the same experimenter, subjects complied at a rate significantly higher than that of subjects presented with only one request but not significantly different from that of subjects presented with a similar first and second request.

The results thus suggest that a commitment to a specific task or issue (e.g., stopping tuition increases) may not be necessary for the increase in compliance found with the low-ball procedure. Instead, it appears that an unfulfilled obligation to the requester may be responsible for the low-ball effect. This unfulfilled obligation to the requester appears to increase compliance to a second request even when a very different issue is involved.

Experiment 3

Taken together, the results of Experiments 1 and 2 suggest that Cialdini et al.'s (1978) interpretation of the low-ball effect may not be correct. Instead of a commitment to the target activity, these two experiments suggest that an unfulfilled obligation to the requester may be responsible for the increase in compliance found with this technique. An important aspect of the Cialdini et al. studies and Experiments 1 and 2 is that subjects agreeing to the initial request were not allowed to perform that behavior at the original cost. If the unfulfilled-obligation-to-the-requester interpretation is correct, then it would be expected that if individuals are provided with an opportunity to fulfill the initial obligation, they will not feel a need to help the requester further and will therefore fail to show the increased rate of compliance found in the low-ball procedure.

¹ If the verbal and behavioral compliance frequencies are analyzed separately, then the same pattern emerges on each measure, though only the verbal measure produces a significant low-ball effect. Specifically, the rates of verbal compliance for the related (13/20) and unrelated (12/20) conditions did not differ significantly, but the combined rate was greater than the compliance rate in the control cell (7/20), $\chi^2(1) = 4.05, p < .05$. Only two letters in opposition to the tuition increase were received (behavioral compliance measure), one each from subjects in the two experimental cells. These letters were forwarded to the University chancellor.

Experiment 3 was designed to examine this possibility. Subjects were either allowed or not allowed to perform the initial low-cost request. The same or a different experimenter later presented the subject with a related but more costly request. It was anticipated that (a) when the subject was allowed to perform the initial request, compliance to the second request would not be affected by whether the same person made the request (since no unfulfilled obligation existed), and (b) when the subject was not allowed to perform the initial request, compliance to the second request would be greater when the same person made the requests than when the requests came from different people (since it is hypothesized that the unfulfilled obligation is to a particular person).

Method

Subjects

Seventy-five college-age males and females served as subjects. Subjects were residents of on-campus dormitories or apartment complexes near the university campus.

Procedure

Subjects were randomly preassigned to one of the five conditions. That is, a random order of doors to be approached and a random order of conditions for subjects' answering their doors were predetermined.

Performance manipulation. In the first part of the experiment, the individual answering the door was presented with the following request by the experimenter:

Hello. My name is _____ and I'm working for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. We are interested in publicizing our current fund-raising drive and I was wondering if you would be interested in helping us by displaying a poster like this one on your door for the next two weeks.

All subjects agreed to this request. In the *perform conditions*, the experimenter thanked the person for helping and then taped an 8½ in. × 11 in. (21.5 cm × 27.9 cm) poster onto the front door. In the *no-perform conditions*, the experimenter reached into an envelope as if to pull out a poster but stopped and announced:

I'm sorry. It looks like I'm all out of posters. I guess I gave my last one away to the last person I talked to. I'm really sorry. But thanks anyway for offering to help.

Thus in the perform conditions, subjects were able to perform the initial small request, whereas in the no-perform conditions, subjects agreed to but were unable

to perform the initial small request. In both conditions, the experimenter recorded the room number, first name, and experimental condition for each subject.

Requester manipulation. Approximately 10–15 minutes after the first request, either the same or a different experimenter returned to the door. In the *same-requester* condition, the experimenter explained "I forgot to mention last time I was here that. . . ." In the *different-requester* condition, the experimenter introduced himself with, "Hello. My name is _____ and I'm working for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society." In both conditions, the experimenter then said:

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is looking for people to serve as volunteers distributing envelopes for MS. There will be an MS representative at [a room in the lobby of the dorm or apartment] between [a 2-hour time interval] tonight handing out collection envelopes in which contributions can be made. Would you be interested in helping MS by going to _____ between _____ and _____ tonight and picking up a collection envelope and either collecting from others or taking the envelope for your own contribution?

Experimenters waited for an affirmative or negative reply before asking subjects for their first names, thanking them, and leaving. The experimenter then recorded the room number, the subject's first name, and whether the subject had agreed to the second request.

Control condition. In the control condition, subjects were approached only once. The experimenter presented the subject with the different-experimenter request to pick up a volunteer packet.²

Results

The names and room numbers of subjects who picked up packets were recorded. As in Experiment 2, subjects were assigned a score of 2 (verbal and behavioral compliance), 1 (verbal compliance only), or 0 (no compliance) for their responses to the second request. The mean scores for the five conditions are presented in Table 2. Four orthogonal contrasts in the context of a one-way analysis of variance were performed to test the specific hypotheses of interest. First, the four experimental conditions were compared with the control condition. This contrast revealed that experimental subjects complied more than controls, $F(1, 70) = 13.34, p < .05$. Next, no effect for the same-different requester variable within the perform conditions was found, $F(1, 70) = .37, ns$.

² Four male experimenters who were blind to the experimental hypotheses were rotated through the roles required in the various conditions. A fifth male acted as the MS representative in the dorm or apartment lobby.

Table 2
*Effects of Same or Different Requester and
 Performance of Initial Request on Compliance
 Rates*

Condition	VCF	BCF	CCI
No perform—same requester	13	4	1.13
No perform—different requester	8	1	.60
Perform—same requester	11	2	.87
Perform—different requester	10	1	.73
Control	5	0	.33

Note. VCF = verbal compliance frequency; BCF = behavioral compliance frequency; CCI = combined compliance index. $n = 15$ for each cell.

If the commitment-to-the-behavior interpretation of the low-ball effect is correct, subjects in the no-perform—different-requester condition should have complied with the second request more often than did subjects in the two perform conditions, because of their unfulfilled obligation to the task, helping MS. However, this effect failed to emerge, $F(1, 70) = 1.01, ns$. Finally, if an unfulfilled obligation to the person is responsible for the increased compliance with the low-ball procedure, then subjects in the no-perform—same-requester condition should have complied significantly more often than subjects in the other three conditions (because this is the only condition in which an unfulfilled obligation to a person exists). A significant contrast supported this viewpoint, $F(1, 70) = 4.51, p < .05$.³

Discussion

Experiment 3 once again demonstrated the effectiveness of the low-ball procedure for increasing the rate of compliance with a costly request by first securing agreement to perform but not allowing performance of a similar behavior at a lower cost. The results also replicated the foot-in-the-door effect, again demonstrating the effectiveness of this compliance technique. Subjects approached by a different individual with a large request, after agreeing to perform or performing a smaller request, agreed to the second request at a higher rate than subjects approached only with the large request. The results also replicated the Cialdini et al. finding that the low-ball procedure (with the same requester)

was more effective in inducing compliance than the foot-in-the-door procedure.

Of most importance in Experiment 3 was the finding that subjects not allowed to perform the initial request and approached by the same person for the second request had a rate of compliance significantly higher than that of subjects in the other three experimental conditions. This finding suggests that the higher rate of compliance for the no-perform—same-requester subjects is due to an unfulfilled obligation to the requester that developed from the inability to perform the initial request. Subjects approached by a different experimenter were not able to fulfill their obligation to the initial requester by complying with the second request. Subjects allowed to perform the initial request were able to fulfill their obligation to the requester and thus were not as likely to comply with the second request as were the no-perform—same-requester subjects. The results thus provide additional support for the unfulfilled-obligation-to-the-requester interpretation of the low-ball effect.⁴

General Discussion

Summary

The three experiments presented here suggest that the low-ball procedure, as opera-

³ These same four contrasts were computed separately on the frequencies of verbal and behavioral compliance (see frequencies in Table 2). Analyses on the verbal compliance measure produced one significant effect: There was greater verbal compliance in the experimental cells (42/60) than in the control cell (5/15), $\chi^2(1) = 6.89, p < .05$. Analyses on the behavioral compliance measure yielded one marginally significant result: Behavioral compliance was greater in the no-perform—same-requester condition (4/15) than in the other three experimental cells combined (4/45), $\chi^2(1) = 3.07, p < .10$.

⁴ In addition to the unfulfilled obligation to the requester, subjects in the same-requester conditions may have also been motivated by impression-management concerns. Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma (1971) have argued that people are motivated to present themselves in a consistent manner to others. However, a motive to appear consistent cannot by itself account for the increase in compliance found for the same-requester subjects not allowed to perform the behavior over that of the perform—same-requester subjects. Because the experimenter saw them perform the initial behavior, perform—same-requester subjects should have been equally if not more motivated to present themselves in a consistent manner than the no-perform subjects.

tionalized by Cialdini et al. (1978), is a successful means of increasing compliance with a request. The effectiveness of the technique across three different types of requests indicates the robust nature of the effect. Consistent with the Cialdini et al. findings, the low-ball procedure also appears to be more effective in increasing compliance than the foot-in-the-door technique.

However, the effectiveness of the low-ball procedure does not appear to be due to the explanation proposed by Cialdini et al., namely, that a commitment to the target behavior develops. Instead, the results of all three experiments presented in the present research suggest that an unfulfilled obligation to the requester may be responsible for the effectiveness of the low-ball procedure. In Experiment 1, which provided the most direct test of the task versus person commitment hypotheses, the low-ball technique was effective only when the same person raised the cost of the initial request. When the higher cost version of the initial request was presented by a different person, no increased compliance over the control condition was found. Experiment 2 found that the second request did not have to be a higher cost version of the initial request. When subjects were unable to comply with the initial low-cost request, they showed enhanced compliance with a higher cost request from the same person, even when the second request was unrelated to the first. Finally, Experiment 3 demonstrated the importance of the nonperformance of the initial request. Individuals who were not allowed to perform the initial request were more likely to comply with the second request presented by the same person than were those allowed to perform the initial request. The results of all three studies provide support for the view that the effectiveness of the low-ball compliance technique is dependent on an unfulfilled obligation to a particular person rather than a commitment to a specific target behavior.

Low-Ball Versus Foot-in-the-Door

Given the above analysis, it seems necessary to clarify the relationship between the low-ball procedure and the foot-in-the-door technique as initially identified by Freed-

man and Fraser (1966). Cialdini et al. suggested that the difference between the two compliance techniques was that the low-ball procedure relied on inducing a commitment to the initial target behavior, whereas the foot-in-the-door procedure did not. However, Experiment 1 strongly indicated that the effectiveness of the low-ball procedure did not depend on inducing a commitment to the initial target behavior. If it did, enhanced compliance should have occurred even when the second request was presented by a different person, but it did not. Also, Experiment 2 demonstrated that the effectiveness of the low-ball procedure was not affected when the initial request was for a behavior very different from the second, more costly request. Thus, a commitment to the initial target behavior does not appear necessary for producing the low-ball effect and therefore cannot distinguish the low-ball from the foot-in-the-door technique.

Another apparent difference between the two procedures concerns the subject's performance of the initial request. Whereas Cialdini et al.'s low-ball subjects were not allowed to perform the request at the initial cost, foot-in-the-door subjects typically perform the initial request. Consistent with the self-perception interpretation of the foot-in-the-door phenomenon (Bem, 1972), the performance of this behavior can be seen as enhancing the subject's self-perception that he or she is the type of person who engages in such behaviors. However, some investigators (Snyder & Cunningham, 1975; Zuckerman, Lazzaro, & Waldgeir, 1979) have successfully produced a foot-in-the-door effect without the performance of the initial behavior (cf. DeJong, 1979). Consistent with this finding, subjects in Experiment 3 who agreed to but were not allowed to perform the initial request from one person complied significantly more often than the control subjects to a second, larger request presented by a different individual.⁵ Thus, whether the subject is allowed to perform the initial re-

⁵ The foot-in-the-door effect did not emerge in Experiment 1 when a different requester presented the second request, because in that study, subjects had an external reason for agreeing to the initial request (i.e., getting an extra hour of credit), so there was no need to search for an internal explanation. Thus, the self-perception process would be unlikely to occur.

quest does not appear to be the crucial distinction between the foot-in-the-door and the low-ball procedures.

The foot-in-the-door effect appears to occur when an individual who agrees to perform (though does not necessarily perform) a small request comes to view him- or herself in a manner that makes him or her more susceptible to a second, more costly request from either the same or a different person. Thus, it is likely that there is a component of the foot-in-the-door effect in each of the four experimental conditions in Experiment 3.

However, one of the experimental conditions in Experiment 3 produced significantly more compliance than the others. Something unique appears to occur when (a) the person does not perform the initial agreed-upon smaller request, and (b) the second, larger request is presented by the same person. Joint occurrence of these two conditions produces an unfulfilled obligation to the initial requester, which is not present in the other three experimental cells (i.e., when the initial behavior is performed and/or the second request comes from a different person). This additional psychological process (an unfulfilled commitment to a person), called the low-ball effect, appears to be responsible for

producing compliance above that which would be expected from the foot-in-the-door procedure alone.

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Manuscripts Accepted for Publication in the Section Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes

The Relationship of Ability to Decode the Spouse and Ability to Decode Opposite Sex Others. Patricia Noller (Animal Behaviour Unit, Department of Psychology, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Queensland 4067, Australia).

Vocal and Verbal Assertiveness in Same- and Mixed-Sex Groups. Charles E. Kimble (Department of Psychology, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio 45469), and Joyce C. Yoshikawa.